



## **The DC Youth Advisory Council**

*Together We Can Be Heard!*

In April 2002, Mayor Anthony A. Williams signed legislation establishing the DC Youth Advisory Council (DCYAC). The DC Youth Advisory Council is located within Serve DC in the Executive Office of the Mayor. It was created by District youth and officials in order for young people throughout the District to have an official ongoing voice in the policies, programs and actions within the city. The DCYAC is responsible for influencing change in legislation and policies that impact youth, and for developing more youth and adult partnerships. The Youth Advisory Council's mission is to make DC a better place for its youth.

### **History**

The DCYAC was established as a result of The City Is Mine: Youth Summit held in November 2000. There, Mayor Williams met with more than 1,400 young people and listened to their suggestions about improving the District. Just as the Citizen Summit gave District residents a hand in shaping the city's policy and budget priorities, the Youth Summit gave youth a voice in shaping these same priorities. At the Summit, DC youth identified three priority issues of safety and violence, education, and jobs/training. An overwhelming message from the Summit was the need to change the way young people interact with their government. The DCYAC empowers youth by giving them the legislative mandate to participate meaningfully in District governance. Through the Youth Advisory Council, youth can play a purposeful role in government decision making.

### **Structure and Support**

The DCYAC consists of 32 council members, between the ages of 13 and 22, selected from various sectors of the District (3 members from each of the 8 wards and 8 at-large representatives who have experience with the Juvenile Justice System and Foster Care). Membership reflects a broad range of diversity encompassing, but not limited to, relevant differences such as ethnicity, location of residency, religion and gender. The Youth Advisory Council advises the Mayor, the District Council, DC public schools, other key decision makers in the District government, and other adult leaders in the District by:

- Commenting on legislation and policies that impact youth;
- Presenting methods to resolve youth-related conflicts between youth and between youth and adults;
- Proposing recommendations to improve the lives of youth;
- Monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of youth programs and policies;
- Partnering with neighborhood and youth organizations on shared issues; and
- Preparing youth for leadership through appropriate training.

Members of the DCYAC have a background in community-based activities with a sincere interest in and motivation to work for the community. As youth leaders, they bring real and fresh perspectives about youth issues, and act as effective communicators between the District and their home communities. The DCYAC meets twice a month and publishes a yearly report, to be publicly distributed, of its activities, recommendations and accomplishments.

The DCYAC is supported by a professional staff with backgrounds in policy and youth advocacy. The DC Youth Advisory Council is located in Serve DC, formerly the Commission on National and Community Service, in the Executive Office of the Mayor. Serve DC, which has grown from one program to an office with a multimillion-dollar operating budget, also administers AmeriCorps, Citizen Corps, Learn and Serve, Mayor's Community Service Awards and the National Youth Service Day.

### **Recent Accomplishments**

Since its creation, the DCYAC has testified at the Mayor's Hearing on the 2004-2005 Education Budget, facilitated a youth crime workshop at the Mayor's Crime Summit, and initiated three youth-led projects through Youth Ventures. DCYAC representatives have also attended national youth summits in Anaheim, CA, and Atlanta, GA, where they interacted with youth leaders from other parts of the country. In addition, the DCYAC has partnered with organizations such as the YMCA and Youth Education Alliance in several endeavors. Last year, the DCYAC facilitated the Cesar Chavez Public Policy Charter High School's Community Action Program, which designed a survey to measure youth civic engagement in DC.

In April 2004, one hundred District students, representing 20 traditional public, private, and public charter schools, convened on the George Washington University campus to talk about public safety, education and housing. The Spring Student Forum 2004, a town hall meeting sponsored by DCYAC and DC Student Voices, has been featured by NewsChannel 8 for its public service announcement. Three representative panelists then presented their recommendations and ideas directly to Mayor Williams, Police Chief Ramsey, and Housing Authority Director Michael Kelly. The response from both sides was overwhelmingly positive. Through this forum youth representatives felt they and the city officials were able to engage in a meaningful dialogue.

### **Membership**

The DCYAC Selection Committee is currently recruiting District youth for the Council and will select 32 members for the 2004-2006 Council. In August, these selected members will attend a training retreat, which will focus on the public policymaking process, youth policy, leadership development and advocacy skills. DCYAC staff will facilitate the two-week retreat.

DCYAC membership benefits include influencing the District's youth-related policies and programs; creating legislation that aids youth; serving as a representative for District youth; interacting regularly with District officials and other local leaders; and developing leadership skills. DCYAC is a wonderful way for young people in the District to gain experience in community service, civic participation and youth advocacy. Throughout the year, DCYAC members will be able to meet and work with other District youth through numerous programs and collaborations. In the addition, DCYAC members may have the opportunity to travel to different cities and participate in national conferences and events.

*Applications are currently being accepted. Deadline for application is **FRIDAY, JULY 2, 2004**. For more information and a membership application, please visit [www.serve.dc.gov](http://www.serve.dc.gov), or email [dcyac@dc.gov](mailto:dcyac@dc.gov), or contact the DCYAC at (202) 727-7976.*

**DC Youth Advisory Council**  
One Judiciary Square  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Phone: 202.727.7976  
Fax: 202.727.8179  
E-mail: [dcyac@dc.gov](mailto:dcyac@dc.gov)  
Website: [www.serve.dc.gov](http://www.serve.dc.gov)